

CHAPTER VI

ROUTE OF CAPTAIN LEWIS TO THE MOUTH OF THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER

WHILE the return of the expedition to Traveller's-rest Creek without the loss or maiming of any of the party must have been a matter for profound thankfulness to each and all of them, it was, likely enough, tempered somewhat with a tinge of regret, for here the party was to be divided. Hitherto, the segregations had been but temporary, and the detached party could easily, in case of necessity, fall back upon the main body. Besides, every day or two there were evidences of their proximity in the shape of the carcass of a deer hung up along the trail, a note attached to a pole, or a messenger sent in, so that, although lost to sight and some miles distant, their presence was really felt. Now, however, the division was to be of a different character, and while they were eventually to come together again, if their plans failed not, yet there would be time and occasion for all sorts of happenings.

We now formed the following plan of operations: Captain Lewis, with nine men, is to pursue the most direct route to the Falls of the Missouri, where three of his party are to be left to prepare carriages for transporting the baggage and canoes across the portage. With the remaining six he will ascend Maria's River to explore the country and ascertain whether any branch of it reaches as far north as the latitude of 50° , after which he will descend that river to its mouth. The rest of the men will accompany Captain Clark to the head of Jefferson River, which Sergeant Ordway and a party of nine men will descend with the canoes and other articles deposited there. Captain Clark's party, which will then be reduced to ten [men

besides himself and Sacágawea], will proceed to the Yellowstone at its nearest approach to the Three Forks of the Missouri. There he will build canoes and go down that river with seven of his party, and wait at its mouth till the rest of the party join him. Sergeant Pryor, with two others, will then take the horses by land to the Mandans.

Gass puts the matter in much the same form, but this plan was considerably modified in its execution by circumstances.

The party remained at Traveller's-rest until July 3d, during which time the arms were put in complete repair, the hunters brought in many deer, the flesh of which they "jerked" and thus rendered it easily transportable, and all things were put in readiness for the forthcoming departure.

A statement of the narrative, at this camp, runs as follows:

The Indians assert that there are great numbers of the white buffaloe or mountain sheep [*Haplocerus montanus*], on the snowy heights of the mountains west of Clark's River. They generally inhabit the rocky and most inaccessible parts of the mountains, but as they are not fleet are easily killed by hunters.

This is eminently true to-day. The white goat [*Ovis montanus*], for such it was—not the Rocky Mountain sheep—is found upon the heights of this range in fairly large numbers, and this locality is one of the best in the country for goat hunting.

The Indians who had so ably guided them across the mountains were prevailed upon to remain and assist Captain Lewis in getting well started on his route.

To the chief Captain Lewis gave a small medal and a gun, as a reward for having guided us across the mountains; in return the customary civility of exchanging names passed between them, by which the former acquired the title of Yomekollick. . . . The Chopunnish, who had overtaken us on

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the 26th, made us a present of an excellent horse for the good advice we gave him.

As to Lewis's new name he says: "I was called Yo-me-kol-lick which interpreted is *the White bearskin foalded.*" This sort of "kollick" was not one, evidently, that required medicinal treatment.

And now for their departure upon divergent trails!

For convenience we will follow Captain Lewis's party in its adventures during this separation, to the time of reunion, and then return and accompany Captain Clark on his journey.

JULY 3d [1806]. All our preparations being completed, we saddled our horses, and the two parties who had been so long companions, now separated with an anxious hope of soon meeting, after each had accomplished the purpose of his destination.

Captain Lewis's party consisted of himself, Gass, Drewyer the two Fields brothers, Werner, Frazier, M'Neal, Thompson, and Goodrich, and the last three were to attend to the portage at the Great Falls.

Captain Lewis followed down the left bank of Clark's River to its junction with the "eastern branch," now known as the Hellgate River. Two miles below the junction they constructed "three small rafts," upon which they finally crossed to the north side, the horses, of course, swimming the river. The raft upon which Lewis and two others crossed was carried down the stream a mile and a half, and as they reached the farther shore the raft sank and Lewis was thrown into the water and compelled to swim ashore. After all were safely landed, they moved up the river three miles and camped on a creek flowing down from the mountains to the north, undoubtedly Grant Creek, which lies about right to meet the conditions of the narrative.

The Indians felt that they could now be of no further use

to the Captain, and after giving him all the information they possessed regarding the trail, which was well beaten and defined, they were released from further service. They remained together during a part of the Fourth of July, 1806, which does not seem to have been celebrated in any manner.

The parting of these faithful friends was with mutual esteem and regret.

We could not insist on their remaining longer with us; and as they had so kindly conducted us across the mountains, we were desirous of giving them a supply of provisions, and therefore distributed to them half of three deer, and the hunters were ordered to go out early in the morning in hope of adding to the stock.

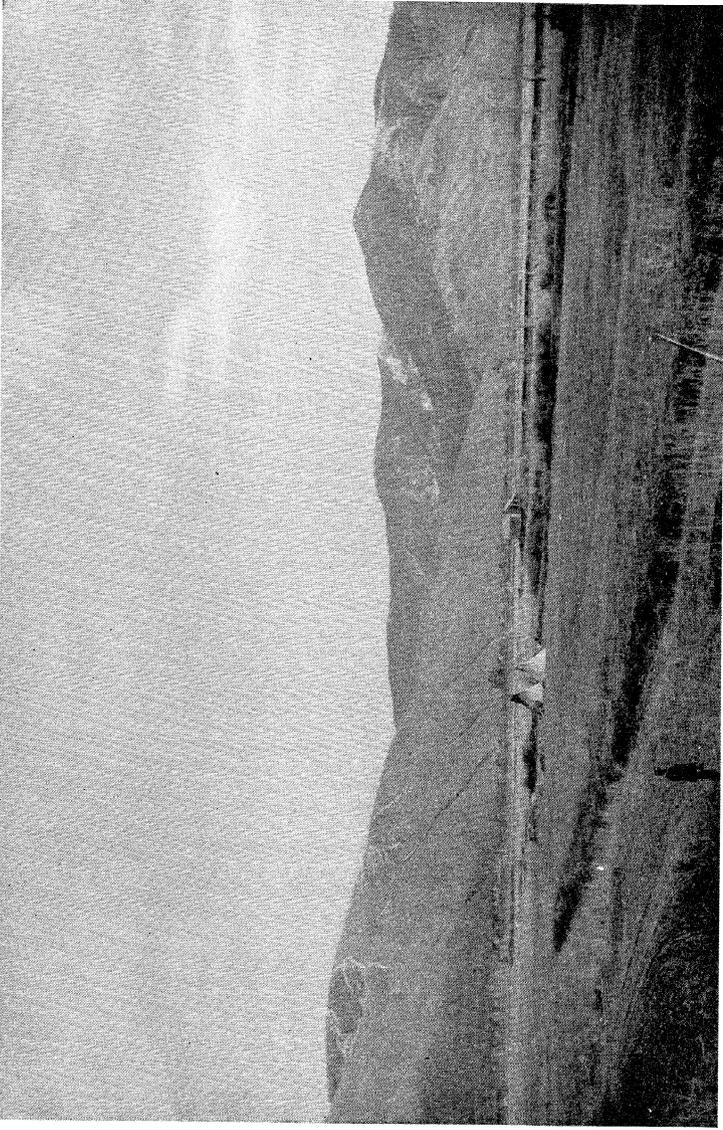
We now smoked a farewell pipe with our estimable companions, who expressed every emotion of regret at parting with us, which they felt the more, because they did not conceal their fears of our being cut off by the Pahkees. . . .

Having taken leave of the Indians, we mounted our horses and proceeded up the eastern [Hellgate River] branch of Clark's River through the level plain in which we were camped. At the distance of five miles we crossed a small creek fifteen yards wide, and entered the mountains.

Gass, too, speaks appreciatively of the Chopunnish. After recounting the events of the passage of the river a little differently from what Lewis does, he records:

We then gave them some presents and took a friendly leave of them: and it is but justice to say, that the whole nation to which they belong, are the most friendly, honest and ingenious people that we have seen in the course of our voyage and travels. After taking our farewell of these good hearted, hospitable and obliging sons of the west, we proceeded on.

In the plain mentioned by Lewis, Missoula is now situated and the "creek fifteen yards wide" is Rattlesnake Creek. This plain at the junction of the two streams is a glorious, wide, mountain-walled valley extending on both sides of the Hellgate River. Near the junction of the rivers Fort Missoula, a



A View from the Car Windows on the Route of Captain Lewis along the Helgate River, Montana, near Missoula. Helgate Cañon in the Distance.

most delightful military post, is located. At the point where they "entered the mountains"—the mouth of Hellgate Cañon—stands, on the north, Mt. Jumbo, a remarkable likeness of a recumbent elephant, in head, trunk, body, shape, and even in the tawny color of the mountain itself. On the opposite side of the Hellgate River and at the base of the mountain the buildings of the Montana State University are conspicuously placed.

The mouth of the Hellgate Cañon is a point of some historical interest as relates to both the name of the cañon and the city of Missoula, and I will quote from Father Palladino's interesting work, heretofore mentioned :

The name Missoula, seems to have been formed from some derivative of the Flat-head radical "i-sul," which means "cold," "chilly," either through a want of natural heat or from surprise, fear, etc., as, chilled with fright; and conveys therefore, the idea of a place of surprise, of threatened, impending, or apprehended danger, arising, for instance, from a foe in ambush.

Thus the Indians called the mouth of the cañon and its approaches. . . . This cañon, about one-eighth of a mile wide at its mouth, was the natural gate through which the Indians west of the range, the Flat-heads, Pend d'Oreilles, Kalispels and Nez Percés had to pass on their annual trips eastward to hunt the buffalo, and here in these fastnesses and narrow passes always lurked war parties of Blackfeet or Piegans to give them battle and steal their horses. Hence the ominous Indian name, which some French speaking Iroquois and trappers who had wandered into the country, rendered very significant by *Porte d'Enfer*, or *Hell's Gate*. The appellation, in both its French and English renderings, passed to the river and to the first white settlement on its banks, a short distance below, while the Indian name, as frequently pronounced by the natives and half breeds, and further euphonized by the whites into Missoula, was given to the town built upon the original spot and later on also to the County.

I have heard it stated that in the early years when the Blackfeet were given to their forays through the cañon, bones and skulls were freely scattered about there, giving

rise to the expression, "*Isul!*—horror and surprise—*Ce ressemble à la porte d'Enfer*. This looks like the gates of hell."

Lewis proceeded up the Hellgate River to the mouth of the Cokalahishkit (Big Blackfoot) River, which, being interpreted, meant "the river of the road to buffalo"; and this it was, for the Nez Percé and Salish used this route to the buffalo grounds. He camped on the night of July 4th eight miles up that stream.

From his camp of the morning to the junction of Hellgate and Cokalahishkit rivers, the Captain followed a trail along which the engineers of the Northern Pacific Railway, seventy odd years later, laid out the line of that railway. The last spike driven on the completion of the through line in 1883 was only fifty-eight miles east from where Lewis left the main stream, and it was also the point where the first discovery of gold in Montana was made, in 1852.

The junction of the Hellgate and Cokalahishkit rivers was the site of the Cantonment Wright of Captain Mullan during the winter of 1861-62, while he was engaged in exploration and construction of the Mullan wagon road, which extended from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla.

On the succeeding days, Lewis proceeded along the Indian trail, which at places carried him away from the stream. There were no incidents of particular importance, but he noted the streams and characteristics of the country as usual, and the Cokalahishkit, or Blackfoot, country is one possessing some fine bursts of scenery.

That Lewis was faithful in his record, Governor Stevens attested in his report, as follows:

As I moved up the valley I began to realize the fidelity of the description of Lewis and Clark, who speak of the whole prairie of the Blackfoot, over which our day's journey led to-day, as the Prairie of the Knobs. On a map of the usual scale, these

knobs or little ridges are too small to be represented, as the slightest mark on the map would exaggerate them.

Stevens Prairie is another name given to the Prairie of the Knobs, or Blackfoot Prairie.

On July 7th, Captain Lewis, following the injunction of the Indians to take *the left-hand trail* when he reached the forks of both trail and stream as he neared the divide, left the main branch—which leads up to Cadotte's Pass—and ascended the one known as Lander's Fork. This stream was explored by F. W. Lander, afterwards General, who was one of Governor Stevens's engineers on his Pacific Railroad survey in 1853, and it was named after him.

Gass's record for the 7th reads thus:

Having gone about five miles, we crossed the main branch of the river, which comes in from the north; and up which the road goes about five miles further and then takes over a hill towards the east. On the top of this hill there are two beautiful ponds, of about three acres in size. We passed over the ridge and struck a small stream, which we at first thought was of the head waters of the Missouri, but found it was not. Here we halted for dinner, and after staying three hours, proceeded on four miles up the branch, when we came to the dividing ridge between the waters of the Missouri and Columbia; passed over the ridge and came to a fine spring the waters of which run into the Missouri. We then kept down this stream or branch about a mile; then turned a north course along the side of the dividing ridge for eight miles, passing a number of small streams or branches, and at 9 o'clock at night encamped after coming 32 miles.

Governor Stevens had this pass and route surveyed by two of his parties in 1853 and 1854; he himself passed through here in 1855, and his report has much to say of the locality.

This pass is known as LEWIS AND CLARK'S PASS, and it is the only one of the six crossed by the explorers that evidences the fact that such men as Lewis and Clark were ever

within the precincts of the Rocky Mountains; and yet, as previously pointed out, it is misnamed. It should be called Lewis's Pass, for Clark never even saw it.

Captain Lewis camped on one of the head streams of Dearborn's River, and the party may well have felt "delighted" and rejoiced to have reached the waters of the Missouri once more.

The worst was, presumably, over when they had recrossed the Bitter Root Range and were again at Traveller's-rest, but they were even then still on Columbian waters, and the route over which they have now come was then an unknown one and, until the wide plains about the Great Falls with their bears and buffaloes were again in sight, "home, sweet home" may have seemed, naturally enough, much farther away than it actually was.

Captain Lewis now abandoned the trail and struck directly north to Medicine, or Sun, River down which they hunted, when the rain allowed them, to the mouth of that stream, which they reached on July 11th.

The buffalo were in the neighborhood in large numbers. There were at least ten thousand of them "within a circuit of two miles," so that upon arriving at their camp-ground early in the afternoon, and the hunters at once beginning their work, they procured before night a stock of food and hides sufficient for their purposes.

From the buffalo hides they made one bull-boat, and a skin canoe after their own designs;—and "toward night" of July 12th crossed over the river to their old camp at Whitebear Islands.

The morning of the 12th, their horses were discovered to be missing and at dark seven of them were unrecovered, "while Drewyer was still in quest of them."

On the 13th, when they opened their *cache* they found that high water from the river had penetrated it and played

havoc. A vial of laudanum had also become uncorked and "run into a drawer of medicines, which it spoiled beyond recovery." Those articles which were in good condition were hidden on a scaffold in the thick brush of one of the islands, as a precaution against Indians until the party from Captain Clark's detachment should arrive with the canoes. The iron frame of the Harper's Ferry boat and the old cottonwood carriage wheels—the latter very precious to them—were in good order.

On the 15th, Drewyer returned without the missing horses. He had followed their trail beyond Dearborn's River and ascertained that a party of Indians—Tushepaws—had stolen them. He continued the pursuit until his own horse was completely exhausted, when, compelled to abandon the trail and the horses, he returned to camp.

One thing to be noted in all the operations of the expedition was the fearlessness and absolute independence of action of these men when sent out on such errands as this. Singly and in pairs they penetrated into unknown wilds, hunting, following lost horses, seeking trails, etc., apparently not knowing hesitation or fear, and risking ambushment, attack, and death.

Their old foes the bears were still seeking whom or what they might devour, about the falls, and M'Neal, who had been sent to examine the *cache* at the lower end of the portage, was the victim of a singular adventure.

Just as he arrived near Willow run, he approached a thicket of brush in which was a white bear, which he did not discover till he was within ten feet of him; his horse started, and wheeling suddenly round, threw M'Neal almost immediately under the bear, which started up instantly, and finding the bear raising himself on his hind feet to attack him, struck him on the head with the butt end of his musket; the blow was so violent that it broke the breech of the musket and knocked the bear to the ground, and before he recovered, M'Neal, seeing a willow tree close by,

sprang up, and there remained while the bear closely guarded the foot of the tree until late in the afternoon. He then went off, and M'Neal being released came down, and having found his horse, which had strayed off to the distance of two miles, returned to camp. These animals are, indeed, of a most extraordinary ferocity, and it is matter of wonder that in all our encounters we have had the good fortune to escape. We are now troubled with another enemy . . . the musquitoes, who now infest us in such myriads that we frequently get them into our throats when breathing, and the dog even howls with the torture they occasion.

It is worthy of passing note that the route by which Lewis had just crossed the mountains and which was so important a link in the *short route* from the Atlantic to the Pacific, of Lewis and Clark, has never been brought into use as a transcontinental railway pass. As we have seen, Governor Stevens explored and mapped it with this object in view, and it has never been forgotten in this connection, but thus far, it has never been found feasible and economical to make use of either Lewis and Clark's or Cadotte's Pass for this purpose.

Captain Lewis was now ready to depart on his exploration to the headwaters of Maria's River. He changed his original plan and, besides leaving M'Neal, Goodrich, and Thompson at this place, left also Gass, Frazier, and Werner, making six in all. He took with him Drewyer and the Fields brothers, without much doubt the three best men of the entire expedition for such a journey. The Captain started on this trip on July 16th. Gass states that Lewis took six horses with him and left four horses behind to assist in making the portage across the plains.

When Captain Lewis left us, he gave orders that we should wait at the mouth of Maria's River to the 1st of September at which time, should he not arrive, we were to proceed on and join Capt. Clarke at the mouth of the Yellow-stone River, and then to return home: but [he] informed us, that should his life

and health be preserved he would meet us at the mouth of Maria's river on the 5th of August.

On the 19th of July, Sergeant Ordway and his nine men arrived with the canoes from the Three Forks, where they had left Captain Clark. Strayed horses then delayed the beginning of the portage for a day, but on July 22d a start was effected.

Broken axle-trees, stormy weather, sickness, and an accident opposed their progress, but on the 26th the portage was completed, and on July 27th, while Gass and a companion swam the horses across to the north, or left, bank of the river and went on overland, Ordway and the rest navigated the canoes down to the mouth of Maria's River, which was reached on July 28th. Gass, in his journal, describes an antelope hunt by wolves that he saw, en route, which is of interest.

In our way we killed a buffaloe and a goat [antelope]. The wolves in packs occasionally hunt these goats, which are too swift to be run down and taken by a single wolf. The wolves having fixed upon their intended prey and taken their stations, a part of the pack commence the chase, and running it in a circle, are at certain intervals relieved by others. In this manner they are able to run a goat down.

Captain Lewis when leaving Whitebear Camp "descended in a skin canoe to the lower side of the Medicine River, where the horses had previously been sent." He first visited the Rainbow Fall, where he made a sketch and dined, and then "proceeded" to the Great Fall, where the party remained during the night of July 16th. Starting from the fall on the succeeding morning, their course was a little west of north, until upon reaching the Tansy, or Rose River, as they also called the present Teton, after a ride of twenty miles they went into camp, as good water and fuel were there abundant.

The beginning of their trip was uneventful, but at this

point an incident occurred that caused them some anxiety. As they reached this river they noticed the fresh tracks of a bleeding buffalo, which was presumptive evidence of the presence of Indians. Those whom they would now meet were

the Minnetarees of Fort de Prairie and the Blackfoot Indians, both of whom are vicious and profligate rovers; and we have therefore everything to fear, . . . if they are sufficiently strong. In order therefore, to avoid if possible an interview with them, we hurried across the [Teton] River to a thick wood, and having turned out the horses to graze, Drewyer went in quest of the buffaloe to kill it, and ascertain whether the wound was given by the Indians, while the rest reconnoitered the whole country. In about three hours they all returned without having seen the buffaloe or any Indians in the plains.

It was really a great risk that Lewis took when he started upon this trip with but three men, and it was the only time that there seems to have been any apparent premonition of trouble to come.

The Tansy River scare, luckily, proved a false alarm, and on the 18th they continued northward, feeling a trifle farther to the west, and passing immense herds of buffalo, until they reached and forded Maria's River, six miles above the point to which Lewis had ascended the previous autumn on that well-remembered reconnoissance.

On July 20th they continued along the north side of the stream, with no incidents of moment, and at the end of twenty-eight miles they camped, again on the north side, and a few miles, apparently, above the mouth of the Dry Fork of Maria's River. At the mouth of this stream the Great Northern Railway branch line from Great Falls to Shelby junction and northward crosses Maria's River.

It was a freak of fortune that Lewis's entire trip into the country of the Blackfeet, barring the scare at Tansy River, was a most eventless, commonplace one until the supreme

moment arrived, when there was crowded into a brief hour, or even less, an experience that made a real adventure of the trip.

July 21st, after a ride of fifteen miles, they reached the forks of Maria's River, the southern branch of which is now known as Two Medicine Creek, or River, and the northern one as Cutbank Creek. Both rise in the main range of the Rockies to the west in about latitude $48^{\circ} 30'$, flow parallel to each other not many miles apart, after the first sheering of the Cutbank to the north, and traverse the entire width of the present Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

As the Captain was searching out the most northern sources of the river, his route manifestly led him to follow the Cutbank branch, which he did, striking out across the plains and reaching the stream again at a distance of eight miles, or near where the main line of the Great Northern Railway crosses the Cutbank at Cutbank station. At this point they forded the stream to the west, or south, side, went on five miles farther and camped "under a cliff, where, not seeing any timber, we made a fire of buffaloe-dung ['chips'] and passed the night."

This was the extreme northern point reached by Lewis on this journey and it was the most northern point reached by any portion of the expedition. The reason for proceeding no farther, Lewis states in these words:

As we have ceased to hope that any branches of Maria's River extend as far north as the 50th degree of latitude, we deem it useless to proceed farther. . . . We therefore determined to remain here two days, for the purpose of making the necessary observations and resting our horses.

During their rest here Drewyer—it was generally Drewyer who was selected when a very important mission requiring intelligence and plains- or woodcraft or both was necessary—
 was sent toward the mountains to examine the further

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Trapper Chased by the Blackfeet Indians. (From drawing by Paxson.)

course of the river. On this jaunt he discovered unmistakable evidences of the recent proximity of Indians. This impression was confirmed by the fact that the hunters found no game, although they went as far south as the Two Medicine Fork of the Maria's, a distance of ten miles.

The lack of game was a serious thing in two ways. First, they were almost out of rations.

We had nothing to eat except the grease which we pressed from our tainted meat and [with which we] formed a mush of cows [kowse], reserving one meal more of the same kind for to-morrow.

Lack of game might necessitate the killing of a horse, which, just then, was not desirable. Again, it meant that the hunters must wander a good many miles away in their fruitless search, which, in a region infested by Blackfeet, was certainly most undesirable and dangerous for all of them, but there was no help for it; luck was with them, however, for they encountered no Indians, although, on July 25th, the hunters saw a great number of "evacuated lodges" and finally, on that same day, they brought home "a fine buck, on which we fared sumptuously."

They were compelled to remain here three days owing to bad weather, and because of his failure to obtain a "celestial observation" Lewis called this place "Camp Disappointment."

A statement of the narrative while at this point is of interest.

The river itself has nearly doubled the volume of water which it possessed when we first saw it below, a circumstance to be ascribed, no doubt, to the great evaporation and absorption of the water in its passage through these open plains.

On July 26th, the weather still being cloudy, Lewis concluded that it was useless to wait longer for an observation,

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so they mounted their horses and departed "in a direction nearly southeast."

Camp Disappointment was located on the Cutbank Fork of Maria's River, very close to the 113th meridian. It was in the heart of the present Blackfeet Reservation and eight or ten miles northwest from Blackfoot station on the Great Northern Railway.

Captain Lewis in his southeastern course evidently passed between the present railway stations of Blackfoot and Carlow, and he reached and forded the Two Medicine branch, two miles above its junction with Badger Creek. He now purposed descending the confluent stream to its junction with the Cutbank, and then, crossing diagonally to the southeast, to the Tansy, or Teton River, following that stream to Maria's River. They accordingly advanced one mile down the stream and, "in a fertile bottom, in which were some Indian lodges that appeared to have been inhabited the last winter," they halted to let the horses graze and to eat a little venison themselves. This spot was, therefore, one mile below the junction of Two Medicine River and Badger Creek.

Continuing the journey:

At the distance of three miles we ascended the hills close to the river side, while Drewyer pursued the valley of the river on the opposite side. But scarcely had Captain Lewis reached the high plain when he saw, about a mile on his left a collection of about thirty horses. He immediately halted, and by the aid of his spy-glass discovered that one-half of the horses were saddled, and that on the eminence above the horses several Indians were looking down toward the river, probably at Drewyer. This was a most unwelcome sight. Their probable numbers rendered any contest with them of doubtful issue; to attempt to escape would only invite pursuit, and our horses were so bad that we must certainly be overtaken; besides which, Drewyer could not yet be aware that the Indians were near, and if we ran he would most probably be sacrificed. We therefore determined to make the best of our situation, and advanced toward them in a friendly manner. The flag which we had brought in case of any such

accident was therefore displayed, and we continued slowly our march toward them. Their whole attention was so engaged by Drewyer that they did not immediately discover us. As soon as they did see us, they appeared to be much alarmed and ran about in confusion, and some of them came down the hill and drove their horses within gunshot of the eminence, to which they then returned as if to await our arrival. When we came within a quarter of a mile, one of the Indians mounted and rode at full speed to receive us; but when within a hundred paces of us he halted, and Captain Lewis, who had alighted to receive him, held out his hand and beckoned to him to approach; he only looked at us for some time, and then, without saying a word, returned to his companions with as much haste as he had advanced. The whole party now descended the hill and rode toward us. As yet we saw only eight, but presumed that there must be more behind us as there were several horses saddled. We however advanced, and Captain Lewis now told his two men that he believed these were the Minnetarees of Fort de Prairie, who, from their infamous character, would in all probability attempt to rob us; but being determined to die rather than lose his papers and instruments, he intended to resist to the last extremity, and advised them to do the same, and to be on the alert should there be any disposition to attack us. When the two parties came within a hundred yards of each other all the Indians except one halted. Captain Lewis therefore ordered his two men to halt while he advanced, and after shaking hands with the Indian, went on and did the same with the others in the rear, while the Indian himself shook hands with the two men. They all now came up, and after alighting, the Indians asked to smoke with us. Captain Lewis, who was very anxious for Drewyer's safety, told them that the man who had gone down the river had the pipe, and requested that as they had seen him, one of them would accompany R. Fields, to bring him back. To this they assented, and Fields went with a young man in search of Drewyer.

Captain Lewis now asked them by signs if they were the Minnetarees of the North, and was sorry to learn by their answer that his suspicion was too true. He then inquired if there was any chief among them. They pointed out three; but though he did not believe them, yet it was thought best to please them, and he therefore gave to one a flag, to another a medal, and to a third a handkerchief. They appeared to be well satisfied with these presents, and now recovered from the agitation into which our first interview had thrown them, for they were

really more alarmed than ourselves at the meeting. In our turn, however, we became equally satisfied on finding that they were not joined by any more of their companions, for we consider ourselves quite a match for eight Indians, particularly as these have but two guns, the rest being armed with only eye-dogs [a sort of hatchet] and bows and arrows. As it was growing late Captain Lewis proposed that they should camp together near the river; for he was glad to see them and had a great deal to say to them. They assented; and being soon joined by Drewyer, we proceeded toward the river, and after descending a very steep bluff, two hundred and fifty feet high, encamped in a small bottom.

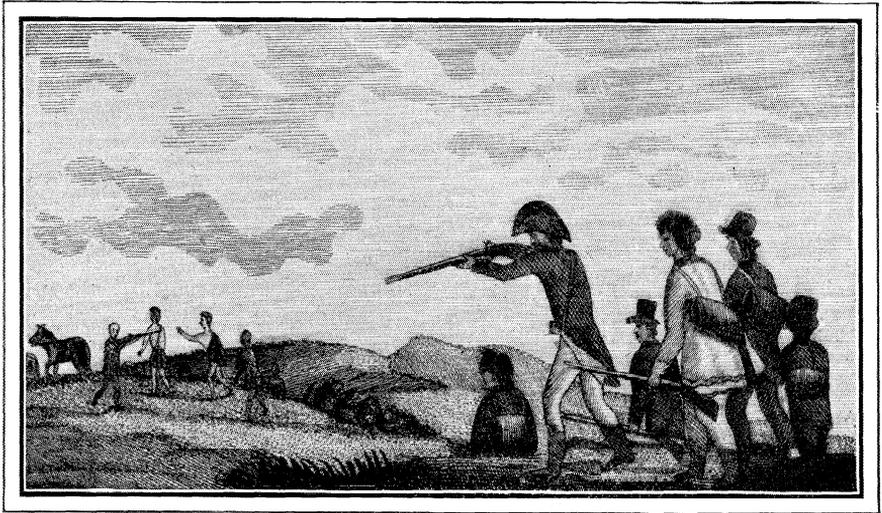
Here the Indians erected a large tent in which they slept with Lewis and Drewyer, while "the Fieldses lay near the fire in front."

During the evening Lewis and the Minnetarees held a council, with Drewyer as interpreter, in which the Indians informed the Captain that a large band of their people were camped about one and a half days' journey west of where Lewis was, at the base of the mountains, and that there was a white man with them. Another band was also in the neighborhood.

Lewis, in turn, gave the Indians an account of his own party and their exploration, placed before them the advantages of peace with the other tribes, as usual, proposed trade relations for the future, and wished some of them to go with him to the mouth of Maria's River. The Indians appeared gentle enough and willingly assented to all these propositions except the last, of which they seemed to fight shy. They were great smokers and as night drew on the Captain kept the pipe going and while the other men went to sleep he "took the first watch to-night and set up untill half after eleven," when, the Indians appearing to have gone to sleep, he awakened R. Fields and he himself laid down and "fell into a profound sleep," first cautioning Fields that as the Indians would probably attempt to steal

their horses to "rouse us all in case any Indians left the camp."

If the Minnetarees thought to lull Lewis and his men into a false security and a watchless sleep, when they could, without danger to themselves, murder them and make off with their scalps and plunder, they were completely foiled.



Captain Lewis Shooting an Indian. (From an old print from "A Journal of Voyages," etc., by Patrick Gass.)

In the morning the Indians arose at dawn before Lewis and his men were awake, and crowded around J. Fields who was on guard, but who, unaccountably enough, had negligently left his rifle near his brother, where the Indians could get it. The opportunity was one not to be lost, and the Indians seized the rifles of the four men, Lewis still being sound asleep, and made off. Fields, however, at once discovered the theft and seeing the thieves running away, he called out, while he and his brother pursued the fellow that

had their own rifles. They overtook him and, in the scuffle which followed, R. Fields stabbed the Indian to the heart; the fellow fell dead almost at once, and the Fieldses hastened back to camp. Drewyer was awake when the Indian attempted to grab his rifle, and in the words of Captain Lewis he

instantly jumped up and sized her and rested her from him but the indian still retained his pouch, his jumping up and crying damn you let go my gun awakened me I jumped up and asked what was the matter which I quickly learned when I saw drewyer in a scuffle with the indian for his gun, I reached to seize my gun but found her gone, I then drew a pistol from my holster and terning myself about saw the indian making off with my gun I ran at him with my pistol and bid him lay down my gun which he was in the act of doing when the Fieldses returried and drew up their guns to shoot him which I forbid. . . . as soon as they found us all in the possession of our arms they ran and indeavored to drive off all the horses I now hollowed to the men and told them to fire on them if they attempted to drive off our horses, they accordingly pursued the main party who were driving the horses up the river and I pursued the man who had taken my gun who with another was driving off a part of the horses which were to the left of the camp, I pursued them so closely that they could not take twelve of their own horses but continued to drive one of mine with some others; at the distance of 300 paces they entered one of those steep niches in the bluff with the horses before them being nearly out of breath I could pursuc no further, I called to them as I had done several times before that I would shoot them if they did not give me my horse and raised my gun, one of them jumped behind a rock and spoke to the other who turned around and stoped at the distance of 30 steps from me and I shot him through the belly, he fell to his knees and on his wright elbow from which position he partly raised himself up and fired at me, and turning himself about crawled in behind a rock which was a few feet from him. he overshot me, being bearheaded I felt the wind of his bullet very distinctly. not having my shot pouch I could not reload my piece and as there were two of them behind good shelters from me I did not think it prudent to rush on them with my pistol which had I discharged I had not the means of reloading untill I reached camp.

The net result of the conflict was the almost total frustration of the Indians' schemes, two dead Indians, the capture of the Indians' camp outfit and four of their horses, and the loss of but one of their own horses, the one ridden by Lewis. While the entire affair was a lamentable one, it had an extremely fortunate ending for our party, and the Indians had themselves alone to thank for it all.

The scene of the conflict is well described by Lewis in the codex, and it was on Two Medicine River, about four miles below the mouth of Badger Creek.

Lewis burned most of the captured Indian paraphernalia and then, apparently without formally breakfasting,

as there was no time to be lost, we mounted our horses, and after ascending the river hills, took our course through the beautiful level plains in a direction a little to the south of east.

It would be interesting to know just what conversation passed among these four men after the Indians had disappeared, the temporary excitement had worn off, and they could calmly face the situation and understand the apparent precariousness of their position. Whatever they said, we know what they thought and did, and it is not difficult to imagine their comments as they hurriedly saddled their horses and set out on that hard, long race for life, as they supposed it to be.

Their expectations of what would happen are thus stated by Lewis:

We had no doubt but that we should be immediately pursued by a much larger party, and that as soon as intelligence was given to the band near the Broken Mountains, they would hasten to the mouth of Maria's River to intercept us. We hoped, however, to be there before them, so as to form a junction with our friends. We therefore pushed our horses as fast as we possibly could; and fortunately for us, the Indian horses were very good, the plains perfectly level without many stones or prickly pears, and in fine order for traveling after the late rains.

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At eight miles' distance from the point of conflict they crossed a stream "forty yards wide, to which, from the occurrence of the morning, we gave the name of Battle River." This stream is certainly that now known as Birch Creek, and it forms the southern and, in conjunction with the Cutbank Creek, a part of the eastern boundary of the present Blackfeet Reservation.

At three o'clock they reached and forded Tansy River, five miles above where they had camped on the 17th and where they had seen the buffalo track that so disturbed them. They estimated that they had now travelled sixty-three miles since the battle of the morning, which seems like a fairly close approximation. They stopped here for an hour and a half to rest the horses, and were sorely in need of rest themselves.

Then they pushed ahead along the south side of Tansy River for seventeen miles more, when, night coming on, they halted again for two hours, killed a buffalo, and refreshed themselves on the choice parts of the animal.

The sky was now overclouded, but as the moon gave light enough to show us the route we continued through immense herds of buffaloe for twenty miles, and then, almost exhausted with fatigue, halted at two in the morning,

JULY 28th, to rest ourselves and the horses. At daylight we awoke sore and scarcely able to stand; but as our own lives as well as those of our companions depended on our pressing forward, we mounted our horses and set out.

This place of bivouac was not far from Fort Benton. These men, if their estimate be correct, rode just one hundred miles from the time they started, after the fight on the morning of the 27th, to two o'clock on the morning of the 28th, and I know from experience that they must have been, as they expressed it, "sore and scarcely able to stand." And yet they must go on.

The men were desirous of crossing the Missouri at Grog Spring, where Rose [Tansy] River [at the *Cracon du Nez*] approaches so near the river, and passing down the southwest [*sic.*, east] side of it, and thus avoid the country at the junction of the two rivers, through which the enemy would most probably pursue us. But as this circuitous route would consume the whole day, and the Indians might in the meantime attack the canoes at the point [*i. e.*, mouth of Maria's River], Captain Lewis told his party it was now their duty to risk their lives for their friends and companions; that he would proceed immediately to the point to give the alarm to the canoes, and if they had not yet arrived he would raft the Missouri, and after hiding the baggage, ascend the river on foot through the woods till he met them. He told them also that it was his determination, in case they were attacked in crossing the plains, to tie the bridles of the horses and stand together till they had either routed their enemies, or sold their lives as dearly as possible.

To this they all assented, and we therefore continued our route to the eastward, till at the distance of twelve miles we came near the Missouri, when we heard a noise which seemed like the report of a gun. We therefore quickened our pace for eight miles further, and about five miles from Grog Spring now heard distinctly the noise of several rifles from the river. We hurried to the bank, and saw with exquisite satisfaction our friends coming down the river.

When the party met the boatmen, who were of course Sergeant Ordway and his men, they had ridden one hundred and twenty miles in somewhat more than twenty-four hours. It was a great though painful retreat of its kind, and after the fright which the sound of that first gun must have caused, it is easy to imagine the revulsion of feeling and the relief which ensued when they saw, not Indian enemies, but their own men and in goodly number too.

The accidental meeting was indeed a fortunate and joyful one; the land party immediately turned loose their horses, embarked in the boats, and the combined outfit hastened down to one of their *caches* near the mouth of Maria's River. This *cache* had caved in and most of the contents were injured, but they took what was still of value and then pro-

ceeded "to the point," where they found the other *caches* in good order.

While engaged in loading the canoes here, they were joined by Gass and Willard with the horses from the falls, whence Ordway had brought the canoes, and all the detachments that were to meet at this point were now united. The red pirogue was too much decayed for further use, so they took out of it what nails and iron might be of value to them and, "giving a final discharge" to their horses, that is to say, finally abandoning them on the prairie, they boarded the canoes, started down the Missouri, and camped, on the night of July 28th, fifteen miles below the mouth of Maria's River.

Through the courtesy of George Bird Grinnell, I am enabled to present a brief account of Captain Lewis's fight with the Blackfeet, which came from one of the Indians engaged in it, and to give also a picture of the Indian himself.

Mr. Grinnell, in his years of affiliation with and study among the Blackfeet, made a friend of old Wolf Calf,

for many years the most aged of the Piegan Blackfeet. He was a mine of ancient lore [Mr. Grinnell states], and was quite willing to talk freely on all historical subjects. When he died he was supposed to be considerably over one hundred years old, and, as nearly as I could figure it, he was one hundred and two, in 1895. He used often to speak of men in the tribe, whom I regarded as very aged, as mere boys, and to say that when he was growing up and old enough to go to war, they had not yet been born.

Regarding the meeting with Captain Lewis, Mr. Grinnell continues:

He told me that he was with a war party to the south when they met the first white men that had ever come into the lower country. They met these people in a friendly fashion, but the chief directed his young men to try to steal some of their things. They did so, and the white men killed the first man with their "big knives." This was the man killed, I suppose, by Fields.

Afterwards the Indians ran off some of the horses of the white men. The name of the first man killed was Side Hill Calf, or Calf Standing on a Side Hill.

Regarding the point where the fight occurred:

Wolf Calf located this place as on the hills immediately south of Birch Creek, where the town of Robare, Teton County, now stands.

The old man did not know who Lewis and Clark were, but his story agrees so exactly with that given in the Journal that I cannot doubt that this was the Indian side of the occurrence. He must have been a young boy at the time, but in the old war days boys of nine and ten years not infrequently went on the war path.

In reply to my inquiry as to any attempt of the Indians to pursue Lewis, Mr. Grinnell said that Wolf Calf

distinctly gave me the idea that the Indians were badly frightened, felt that they had been punished, and I think he ended his story with, "then we all ran away." I have no doubt in my own mind that they flew north about as fast as Lewis flew south and east.

There is just one point where Wolf Calf and Captain Lewis do not agree, and that relates to "where the battle was fought." This discrepancy is not easily reconciled except upon the theory of misinterpretation, which is hardly possible, or upon the assumption that the old Indian had become, in time, slightly confused as to locality, and placed the battle-ground *south* instead of *north* of Birch Creek, where, on Two Medicine River, it seems incontestable that it was. This assumption is, I think, easily possible and admissible.

The reader, I doubt not, will agree with me that the Indian testimonies I have been fortunate enough to adduce have been most naturally corroborative, and attest the strength and fidelity of the narrative of the explorers. Even such discrepancies as we find prove the truth of the

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stories themselves and, equally, that of the great epic narration.

Captain Lewis does not state what caused him, in con-



Courtesy of Geo. Bird Grinnell

Wolf Calf, one of the Blackfeet whom Captain Lewis and party fought with on headwaters of Maria's River, in 1806. This represents him in 1895 when 102 years old.

ducting this retreat, to go around two sides of a triangle instead of along the hypotenuse to reach the mouth of Maria's River. He expected to meet the Indians, if at all, at the mouth of that stream, and he did not intend to cross the Missouri until reaching the junction of the two rivers, and

yet he took the longest way to reach his objective point. He knew too that he had many hours' start of the Minnetarees, for the nearest band of them was at the Broken Mountains, some thirty or forty miles to the north of the battle-ground.

The one reason which suggests itself is that the travelling along the route pursued was much better than nearer the Maria's, and this was an important matter.

Writing to Senator Paris Gibson of Great Falls, Montana, regarding the probable reasons for Lewis taking this route in his retrograde movement, his reply, from which I quote, confirms the opinion here expressed.

Had he attempted to follow the Marias River, he would have encountered interminable difficulties, as the coulees or ravines which make into that stream are very deep, and in many places almost impassable, particularly within forty or fifty miles of the mouth of the river.

The journey down the Missouri was a rapid but uncomfortable one, owing to violent storms of rain and wind. They passed the Musselshell River on August 1st, Milk River on August 4th, and reached the junction of the Missouri and the Yellowstone on August 7th, after making on that day more than ninety miles. Here they found a note from Captain Clark showing that he was several days in advance of them and would wait for them at some convenient point below.

Gass, although he seems not to mention the note which Lewis found, makes this interesting reference to the stop at this old camp of Clark's:

We found that Captain Clarke had been encamped on the point some time ago, and had left it. We discovered nothing to inform us where he was gone, except a few words written or traced in the sand, which were "*W. C. a few miles further down on the right hand side.*" Captain Lewis having left a few lines for the two men [hunters] in the canoe, to inform them, if they

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are still behind, where we were gone, we continued our voyage. At night we encamped after coming above 100 miles; and though dark, killed a fat buffaloe at the place of our encampment.

August 11th was an unfortunate day for Captain Lewis. Hastening on to reach a particular point in order to get an observation for latitude at a certain hour, they missed it by twenty minutes, and then Lewis and Cruzatte landed to hunt elk for a short time. I quote the narrative as to what followed.

Each of them fired and shot an elk. They then reloaded and took different routes in pursuit of the game, when just as Captain Lewis was taking aim at an elk, a ball struck him in the left thigh, about an inch below the joint of the hip, and missing the bone, went through the left thigh and grazed the right to the depth of the ball. It instantly occurred to him that Cruzatte must have shot him by mistake for an elk, as he was dressed in brown leather, and Cruzatte had not a very good eye-sight.

Lewis then called out [see codex] "damn you, you have shot me" but receiving no reply and seeing and hearing nothing he called on Cruzatte by name several times, but received no answer. He now thought that as Cruzatte was out of hearing, and the shot did not seem to come from more than forty paces' distance, it must have been fired by an Indian; and not knowing how many might be concealed in the bushes, he made toward the periogue, calling out to Cruzatte to retreat as there were Indians in the willows. As soon as he reached the periogue he ordered the men to arms, and mentioning that he was wounded, though he hoped not mortally, by the Indians, bade them follow him to relieve Cruzatte. They instantly followed for a hundred paces, when his wound became so painful and his thigh stiffened in such a manner that he could go no farther. He therefore ordered the men to proceed, and if overpowered by numbers, to retreat toward the boats, keeping up a fire; then limping back to the periogue, he prepared himself with his rifle, a pistol, and the air-gun, to sell his life dearly in case the men should be overcome.

Gass states that then,

Having prepared for an attack, I went out with three men to reconnoitre and examine the bushes, which are very thick at this place, and could see no Indians; but after some time met with the man who went out with Captain Lewis, and found on inquiry that he had shot him by accident through the hips, and without knowing it pursued the game. Having made this discovery we returned to the periogue; examined and dressed Captain Lewis's wound; and found the ball, which had lodged in his overalls.

They now dressed the wound as best they could and "patent lint was put into the holes." The wound bled freely, but was not serious, as it turned out.

The codex of August 12th says:

My wounds feel very stiff and soar this morning but gave me no considerable pain. there was much less inflammation than I had reason to apprehend there would be. I had last evening applied a poltice of peruvian barks.

On the 12th, they met two traders ascending the river who retraced their course and returned with them to the Mandan towns. This day, also, Colter and Collins, who, on August 3d, had gone in advance to hunt and who had not been seen since, rejoined them. Thinking the party were behind them these hunters had, on the 4th, waited for them, but finally, convinced of their mistake, they had pushed ahead as rapidly as possible. At one o'clock on July 12th, the party overtook Captain Clark and they were all once more united.

Captain Lewis at this time ceased to record the events of the trip, and in these words, taken from the codex, surrenders this duty to Captain Clark; "As wrighting in my present situation is extremely painful to me I shall desist untill I recover and leave to my frind Capt. C. the continuation of our journal." Captain Lewis did not resume the rôle of recorder and historian during the journey, his record of August 12th being the last.